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ABSTRACT

The document examines the roles of peer relations and parent monitoring in increasing children's risk of developing a deviant network of friends. Subjects were approximately 200 boys and their families. Boys were assessed in school and interviewed when 9-10 years old and when 11-12 years old. Structural equation modeling was used to evaluate the fit of three alternative models to the observed data: a stability model, a synchronous effects model, and a cross-lagged effect model. A multi-agent and multi-method approach to measurement was used. This approach employed data from schools, children, and parents. Comparison of the three models found that the synchronous and cross-lagged models adequately fit the data, with the cross-lagged model superior to the others. Analyses revealed that peer relations and parent monitoring contribute to preadolescent boys' development of a deviant peer group at age 12, and that the effect of peer rejection may accumulate. Thus, the deviant peer group process may help explain the longitudinal relation between early poor peer relations and later social maladjustment. (RH)

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A Process Model for the Role of Peer Relations in Adolescent Social Adjustment

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The present report examines the role of peer Relations and parent monitoring in increasing the risk of a younster developing a deviant peer group by early adolescence. The model was tested on a sample of approximately 200 boys and their families who were assessed in the school and interviewed at age 9-10 and age 11-12. Structural equation modeling was used to evaluate the fit of three alternative models to the observed data(ie, Stability Model, Synchronous Effects Model and Cross-lagged Effect Model). A multi-agent and-method approach to measurment was used, using data from both the schools, the child and parents. In comparing alternative models in terms of the chi square Goodness-of-fit, it was found that the a priori model adequately fit the data, and showed incremental improvement when including the hypothesized causal influences. Results to these analyses revealed that both Peer Relations and Parent Monitoring contribute to the boy's development of a deviant peer group by age 12. These analyses support the hypothesis that one mediating link between peer rejection and later adjustment is the deviant peer group. The hypothesis is further buttressed by the fact that peer relations accounted for variance in deviant peers when controlling for parenting practices.

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A Process Model for the Role of Peer Relations
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Introduction. Research on peer relations clearly reveals that children rejected by their peers have long term adjustment problems, including later delinquency, truancy and psychopathology. The actual processes describing the relation between poor peer relations and later maladjustment has not been clarified. The deviant peer group has been found to have a powerful influence on the adolescent's initiation into novel behavior patterns such as substance use and delinquent behavior. The present report examines the role of poor Peer Relations and low Parent Monitoring in increasing the risk of a youngster developing a deviant network of friends, from middle childhood to early adolescence.

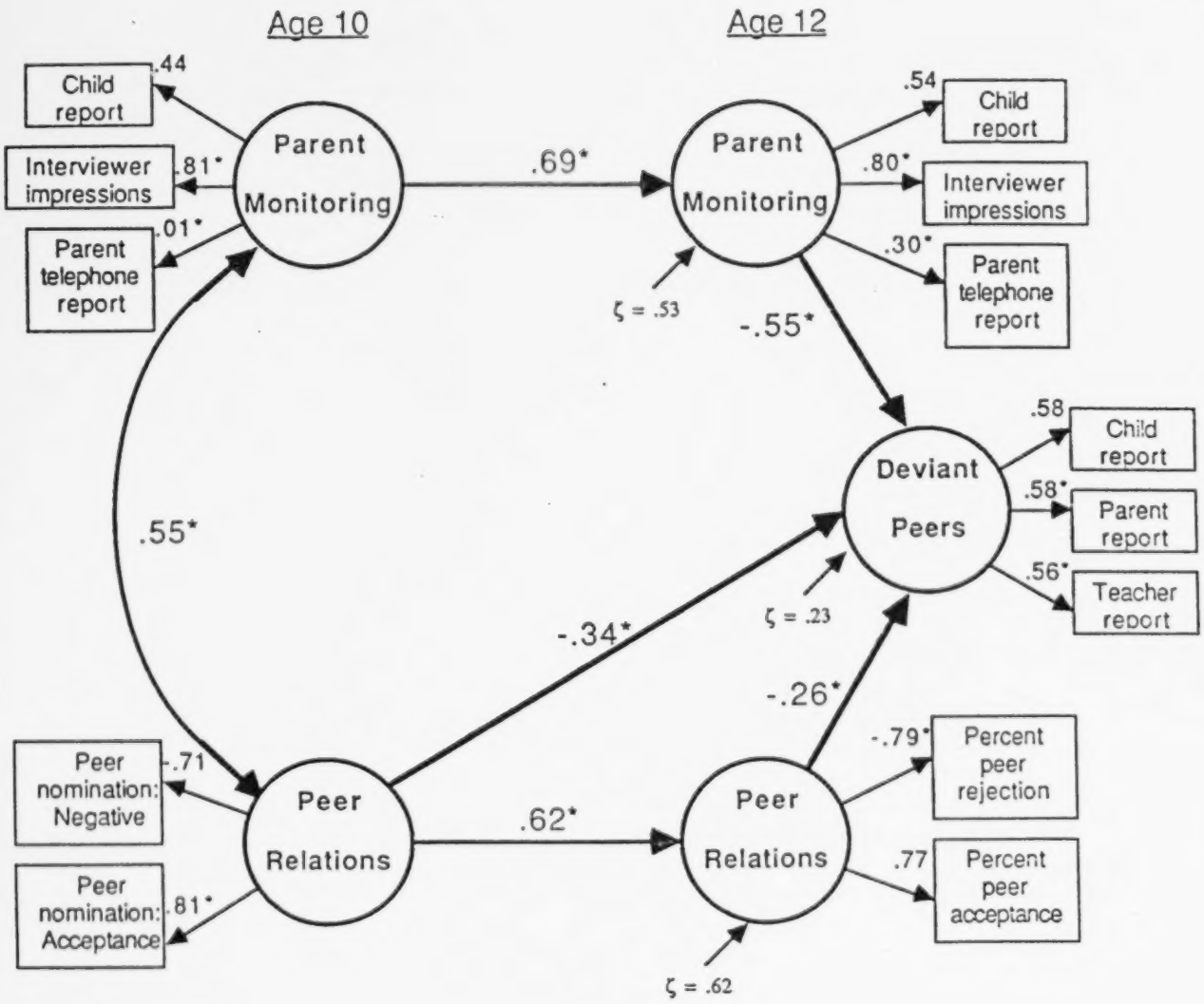
Sample and Procedures. The model was tested on a sample of approximately 200 boys and their families who were assessed in the school and interviewed at age 9-10 and age 11-12. Structural equation modeling was used to evaluate the impact of poor Peer Relations and Parent Monitoring at age 10 and 12. Measurement of the three constructs in the model was approximately equivalent across the two ages (see Figure 1), using the following methods in the definition of constructs: peer nominations, teacher ratings, child interview, parent telephone interview and the Child Behavior Checklist.

Results. Three alternative models were compared : 1) The stability model, which assumes that Peer Relations and Parent Monitoring are

stable from age 10 to 12, and that these do not contribute to the child's association with Deviant Peers at age 12; 2) The Synchronous Effects model, which tests the hypothesis that both Peer Relations and Parent Monitoring at age 12 contribute to the youngsters association with Deviant Peers at age 12 ; 3) The Cross-Lagged Effects model, tests the additional assumption that Peer Relations at age 10 affects Deviant Peers at age 12, as well as Parent Monitoring and Peer Relations at the same age (see Figure 1). In comparing the three alternative models using the chi square Goodness-of-fit index (see Table 1) it was found that the Synchronous and the Crossed-Lagged model adequately fit the data (see Figure 1). As shown in Table 1, the chi square Goodness-of-Fit index showed that the Cross-Lagged model had a statistically superior fit to the observed data compared to the Synchronous or Stability models.

Discussion These analyses revealed that both Peer Relations and Parent Monitoring contribute to the boy's development of a deviant peer group at age 12, and that the effect of peer rejection maybe accumulate over time. Thus the deviant peer group process may help explain the longitudinal relation between early poor peer relations and later social maladjustment. It is likely that different subgroups of children with poor sociometric status are at varying risks to develop a network of deviant peers. For example, neglected or isolated children may not be at equal risk to merge into a deviant peer group as rejected children. Further, subgroups of rejected children maybe at differential risk, where the aggressive subtype is expected to be at highest risk. Future research would benefit from replication of the process model tested in the present study, and determining the differential risk of various subgroups of rejected and isolated children in respect their later placement in social contexts that support some maladaptive behaviors.

Figure 1. Cross-lagged effects of peer relations on deviant peers.



$\chi^2_{(52)} = 61.34$

$p = .176$

GFI = .951

RMSR = .047

* $p < .01$

Table 1. Summary Statistics for Alternative Process Models

Model	D. F.	Chi-Square Goodness of Fit	P-Value
Stability Model	56	179.9	.000
Synchronous Effect Model	53	69.4	.10
Cross-lagged Effect Model	52	63.8	.18